

JCC 9
Dec 1777

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The members chosen, Mr. [Francis] Dana, Mr. [Benjamin] Rumsey, and Mr. [Joseph] Jones.

Resolved, That Mr. [Francis] Dana be excused from attending the Board of War, in order that he may attend the duties of the Treasury Board.

Ordered, That Mr. [Richard] Law, Mr. [William] Williams, and Mr. [James] Duane have leave of absence.

The committee for Indian affairs, to whom were referred a letter from the president of South Carolina, and sundry other papers, having taken the same into consideration, reported a speech to the Six Nations and instructions to the commissioners for Indian affairs in the northern department, which were taken into consideration, and agreed to as follows:

BROTHERS, SACHEMS, AND WARRIORS OF THE SIX NATIONS!

The great council of the United States call now for your attention. Open your ears, that you may hear, and your hearts, that you may understand,

BROTHERS, SACHEMS, AND WARRIORS OF THE SIX NATIONS!

When the people on the other side of the great water, without any cause, sought our destruction, and sent over their ships and their warriors to fight against us, and to take away our possessions, you might reasonably have expected us to ask for your assistance. If we are enslaved, you cannot be free. For our strength is greater than yours. If they would not spare their own brothers, of the same flesh and blood, would they spare you? If they burn our houses and ravage our lands, could yours be secure?

But, brothers, we acted on very different principles. Far from desiring you to hazard your lives in our quarrel, we advised you to sit still in ease and peace. We even entreated you to remain neuter; and, under the shade of your trees, and by the side of your streams, to smoke your pipe in safety and contentment. Though pressed by our enemies, and when their ships obstructed our supplies of arms and powder, and cloathing, we were not unmindful of your wants. Of what was necessary for our own use, we cheerfully spared you a part. More we should have done, had it been in our power.

BROTHERS, CATUGAS, SENECA, TUSCARORAS, AND MOHAWKS!

Open your ears and hear our complaints. Why have you listened to the voice of our enemies? why have you suffered Sir John Johnson and Butler to mislead you? why have you assisted General St. Leger and his warriors from the other side of the great water, by giving them a free passage through your country to annoy us; which both you and we solemnly promised should not be defiled with blood? why have you suffered so many of your nations to join them in their cruel purposes? Is this a suitable return for our love and kindness? or did you suspect, that we were too weak or too cowardly to defend our country; and join our enemies, that you might come in for a share of the plunder? what has been gained by this unprovoked treachery? what but shame and disgrace! your foolish warriors and their new allies have been defeated and driven back in every quarter; and many of them justly paid the price of their rashness with their lives. Sorry are we to find that our ancient chain of union, heretofore so strong and bright, should be broken by such poor and weak instruments as Sir John Johnson and Butler, who dare not shew their faces among their countrymen, and by St. Leger, a stranger, whom you never knew! what are become of the spirit, the wisdom, and the justice of your nations? is it possible that you should barter away your ancient glory, and break through the most solemn treaties for a few blankets or a little rum or powder? that trifles such as these should prove any temptation to you to cut down that strong tree of friendship, by our common ancestors planted in the deep bowels of the earth at Onondaga, your central council fire; that tree which has been watered and nourished by their children until the branches had almost reached the skies! as well might we have expected, that the mole should overturn the vast mountains of the Allegany, or that the birds of the air should drink up the waters of Ontario!

BROTHERS, CATUGAS, SENECA, TUSCARORAS, MOHAWKS!

Look into your hearts, and be attentive. Much are you to blame, and greatly have you wronged us. Be wise in time. Be sorry for and amend your faults. The great council, though the blood of our friends, who fell by your tomhawks at the German Flats, cries aloud against you, will yet be patient. We do not desire to destroy you. Long have we been at peace; and it is still our wish to bury the hatchet, and wipe away the blood which some of you have so unjustly shed. Till time shall be no more, we wish to smoke with you the calumet of

friendship around your central council fire at Onondaga. But, brothers, mark well what we now tell you. Let it sink deep as the bottom of the sea, and never be forgotten by you or your children. If ever again you take up the hatchet to strike us; if you join our enemies in battle or council; if you give them intelligence, or encourage or permit them to pass through your country to molest or hurt any of our people, we shall look upon you as our enemies, and treat you as the worst of enemies, who, under a cloak of friendship, cover your bad designs, and, like the concealed adder, only wait for an opportunity to wound us, when we are most unprepared.

Brothers: Believe us who never deceive. If, after all our good counsel, and all our care to prevent it, we must take up the hatchet, the blood to be shed will lie heavy on your heads. The hand of the thirteen United States is not short. It will reach to the farthest extent of the country of the Six Nations; and while we have right on our side, the good spirit whom we serve, will enable us to punish you, and put it out of your power to do us farther mischief.

BROTHERS, ONEIDAS AND ONONDAGAS!

Hearken to what we have to say to you in particular: It rejoices our hearts, that we have no reason to reproach you in common with the rest of the Six Nations. We have experienced your love, strong as the oak, and your fidelity, unchangeable as truth. You have kept fast hold of the ancient covenant-chain, and preserved it free from rust and decay, and bright as silver. Like brave men, for glory you despised danger; you stood forth, in the cause of your friends, and ventured your lives in our battles. While the sun and moon continue to give light to the world, we shall love and respect you. As our trusty friends, we shall protect you; and shall at all times consider your welfare as our own.

BROTHERS, OF THE SIX NATIONS!

Open your ears and listen attentively. It is long ago that we explained to you our quarrel with the people on the other side of the great water. Remember that our cause is just; you and your forefathers have long seen us allied to those people in friendship. By our labour and industry they flourished like the trees of the forest, and became exceeding rich and proud. At length, nothing would satisfy them, unless, like slaves, we would give them the power over our whole substance. Because we would not yield to such a shameful bondage, they took up the hatchet. You have seen them covering our

coasts with their ships, and a part of our country with their warriors; but you have not seen us dismayed; on the contrary, you know, that we have stood firm like rocks and fought like men, who deserved to be free. You know that we have defeated St. Leger, and conquered Burgoyne and all their warriors. Our chief men, and our warriors, are now fighting against the rest of our enemies, and we trust that the good spirit will soon put them in our power, or enable us to drive them all far beyond the great waters.

Brothers: Believe us that they feel their own weakness, and that they are unable to subdue the thirteen United States. Else why have they not left our Indian brethren in peace, as they first promised, and we wished to have done? Why have they endeavoured by cunning speeches, by falsehood and misrepresentation, by strong drink and presents, to embitter the minds and darken the understandings of all our Indian friends on this great continent, from the north to the south, and to engage them to take up the hatchet against us without any provocation? The Cherokees, like some of you, were prevailed upon to strike our people. We carried the war into their country and fought them. They saw their error, they repented, and we forgave them. The United States are kind and merciful, and wish for peace with all the world. We have, therefore, renewed our ancient covenant-chain with that nation.

Brothers: The Shawanese and the Delawares give us daily proofs of their good disposition and their attachment to us; and are ready to assist us against all our enemies. The Chickasaws are among the number of our faithful friends. And the Choctaws, though remote from us, have refused to listen to the persuasions of our enemies, rejected all their offers of corruption, and continue peaceable. The Creeks are also our steady friends. Oboylaco, their great chief, and the rest of the sachems and warriors, as the strongest mark of their sincere friendship, have presented the great council with an eagle's tail and rattle trap. They have desired that these tokens might be shewn to the Six Nations and their allies, to convince them that the Creeks are at peace with the United States. We, therefore, have directed our commissioners to deliver them into your hands. Let them be seen by all the nations in your alliance, and preserved in your central council-house at Onondaga.

BROTHERS, SACHEMS, AND WARRIORS OF THE SIX NATIONS!

Hearken to our counsel. Let us, who are born on the same great continent, love one another. Our interest is the same, and we ought

to be one people, always ready to assist and to serve each other. What are the people who belong to the other side of the great water to either of us? They never came here for our sakes; but to gratify their own pride and avarice. Their business now is to kill and destroy our inhabitants, to lay waste our houses and farms. The day, we trust, will soon arrive when we shall be rid of them forever. Now is the time to hasten and secure this happy event. Let us then, from this moment, join hand and heart in the defence of our common country. Let us rise as one man and drive away our cruel oppressors. Henceforward let none be able to separate us.

If any of our people injure you, acquaint us of it, and you may depend upon full satisfaction. If any of yours hurt us, be you ready to repair the wrong or punish the aggressor. Above all, shut your ears against liars and deceivers, who, like false meteors, strive to lead you astray, and to set us at variance. Believe no evil of us, till you have taken pains to discover the truth. Our council-fire always burns clear and bright in Pennsylvania. Our commissioners and agents are near your country. We shall not be blinded by false reports or false appearances.

Brothers: What may be farther necessary at this time for our common good, you will learn from our commissioners, who sit round our council-fire at Albany. Hear what they say, and treasure it up in your hearts. Farewell.

From our great council-fire in Pennsylvania, the 3 day of December, 1777.

By order of Congress.

Instructions to the commissioners for Indian affairs in the northern department.

The glorious successes of our arms in the north, and the severe chastisement which the unfriendly Indians have received, will dispose the Six Nations to dread our resentment, and to value our protection. While they are under these impressions, will be the proper season to urge them to some decisive enterprize, which will effectually tie them to our cause and promote the public service.

Congress have therefore sent them a speech, which is to be communicated to the different nations, and their feelings upon it attentively watched; and every possible advantage derived to the states from favorable circumstances.

Congress have at present two great objects in view from their assistance, &c. &c.

1. As the Ottawas, Chippawas, Wiandots and Mingoes at Pluggy's town are now actually carrying on a predatory war against the inhabitants of the western frontiers of Virginia and Pennsylvania, the Six Nations are to be prevailed upon to oblige them immediately to desist; in case of refusal, to declare war against them and surprize and destroy their towns. If the latter plan should be agreed to, they will be aided by General Hand, should that be convenient.

2. They are to be induced to surprize Niagara, which will be practicable, if the Senecas heartily embrace the measure and it is conducted with prudence and secresy.

These are capital objects, in the execution of which, great circumspection is necessary; and especially in broaching them to the Indians. And they therefore will demand the utmost attention of the Commissioners.

Resolved, That Mr. [James] Duane be requested to confer with the commissioners for Indian affairs in the northern department and to give them every aid and assistance in his power, in their deliberations, conferences and treaties with the Indians.

Congress proceeded to the election of two commissioners for auditing claims at the Board of Treasury and the ballots being taken,

James Milligan and William Turnbull were elected.

Whereas¹

The Committee to whom it was referred to consider of a proposition for surprizing and destroying the enemies shipping at St John's or elsewhere, on Lake Champlain, during the winter season have duly considered thereof, and being of opinion that such an enterprize is of the utmost importance, and promises the greatest Prospect of Success; provided it can be conducted with Prudence, Resolution and Secrecy, Report the following Plan for carrying it into effect.

I. That the *Hon^{ble} Jas Duane Esq.* be authorized and directed in a personal Conference to communicate the Enterprize to Brigadier General Starke, who is appointed to the Command: and to consider with him of the best and most practicable means for its accomplishment.

¹ An unfinished entry.